

Reflection from the Superior General

Pentecost begins with the disciples and Mary and “the other women” being closed in on themselves for fear. Then their prayers are answered when the flame of the Holy Spirit fires their lives and they are transformed. They lose their pre-occupation with their own anxiety and go out to preach the Good News to people of all nations. They are filled with the courage of the Spirit and boldly proclaim Christ Risen, ascended into heaven, the manifestation of “*a new heaven and a new earth*”. (Rev. 21:1). As baptised, confirmed and professed Marists we share in the grace of Pentecost.

Discussion at the recent Superior Generals’ gathering in Rome focused on *Laudato Si’*. It is now four years since it was published. I heard leaders saying that while almost everyone was appreciative of the document, it hardly seems to have affected “the culture” of their Congregations. I know that many Marists are making great efforts to implement the spirit of *Laudato Si’*. Yet I still wonder whether we are on fire with the Holy Spirit, preaching the Good News of God’s creation as we are called to do by Pope Francis.

The environmental crisis is an example in practical terms of so many destructive narratives of our time which involve idolizing rampant consumerism and excessive individualism and nationalism.



If the primary cause is spiritual then the primary - but not exclusive - response needs also to be spiritual. We are called to be Pentecost People, fired into bold courageous action by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit brings about a conversion, an “ecological conversion”. (L.S., 216 – 221) The Holy Spirit helps to see that “*Everything is, as it were, a caress of God.*” (L.S. 84)

“Ecological conversion” forms our hearts, minds and activity as we contemplate the truth that “everything is interconnected”, (L.S., 42), everything is suffused in Christ. We see that “*everything is created through him and for him*”. (Col. 1:16). Our hardened hearts are touched by the wounds of Christ, the wounds of the poor and of our devastated planet. Severed relationships between ourselves and God, nature and others, are healed through the fire of the Spirit. Our response to the moral and spiritual crises of our time involves personal and communal transformation by the power of the Spirit.

Pentecost is a community and ecclesial movement of grace. We too are called to respond communally to the wretched cries from the land and from our poorest sisters and brothers. While *Laudato Si’* can seem a long document yet each community can, on a regular basis, select one section for group prayer and reflection. (For example, L. S., nos. 216 – 227). This needs concrete action. Let’s ask ourselves the challenging questions that will call our life-style to be contemplative and authentic, responding prophetically to the crises of our times.

Our communities are called to be free of any hoarding or greediness as we learn to live more simply and generously. We need to be facing the hard decisions around our use of fossil fuels, our carbon footprints, our waste disposal and use of plastics, the food we eat as well as the ethics of our investments. We need to act together for the care of “our common home” and adopt best practices with regards to energy, travel, life-style and carbon neutrality. These attitudes are as ancient as the beginnings of Religious Life itself and never more crucial than in these present times.

Marists cannot live authentically the Spirit of the Society without looking to the implications of our way of life for the care of the planet. Laudato Si’ gives us a new perspective for reading our Constitutions. (2017, General Chapter, 45). Each of us as Marist, individually and communally, is called to a Pentecost response to “the cry of the poor and the cry of the land”.

John Larsen s.m.